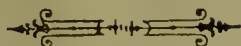


BOROUGH OF BECCLES.



Medical Officer's

Annual Report

For the Year ending December, 1898.

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MEDICAL OFFICER'S ANNUAL REPORT

For the Year ending December, 1898.

GENTLEMEN,

The Report which I place before you for the year ending December, 1898, is not quite so favourable as last, for although there have not been quite so many cases of Scarlet Fever, we have had more Diphtheria and Erysipelas, and a visitation of Typhoid Fever, the origin of which is difficult to trace.

TYPHOID FEVER.—The first case was notified in February, in Ingate street; the man was a labourer on the G.E.R.; he had been engaged in the reconstruction of some insanitary cottages in Yarmouth. In this case, the alvine discharges were disinfected with lime and buried deeply in the garden as a preventative of the disease spreading. The next we find in Denmark road, in March, which was attributed to the eating of mussels. Three other cases occur about this time, two of which were caused by the same article of food; the third was supposed to have been caused by exposure on the Lowestoft Fish Market to the smell of the bilge water from the boats in the harbour. Another in April brought the germs of the disease home with her from London. Then there is no direct means of tracing the origin in cases occurring in Alexandra and London roads, beyond the fact that one had been to Lowestoft and the other to Yarmouth. The drains in connection with the house in Alexandra road are quite up-to-date, and as near perfect as possible, so far as our knowledge of sanitary science requires them to be. The London road house drain was blocked now and again, but I did not consider that

sufficient to account for the fever in this case. The drains were relaid. These were in May and June. Then no case is reported till November, when one turns up in the Market place, and this is clearly traced to the eating of mussels, for after partaking of these delicacies, Diarrhœa and sickness set in. The last case notified for 1898 was caused, I believe, by exposure to the weather, and not taking sufficient care to remove his wet clothes.

It may at first sight appear ridiculous to attribute the cause of Typhoid Fever to this innocent bi-valve, but over and over again I have been called to visit people who were suffering from the poisonous effects produced by them. "Typhoid," we are told, "is an endemic contagious fever generated by the ingestion of decomposing animal matter," also that "it is more prevalent in dry and hot, than in cold and wet seasons." So probably the climatic condition generated the disease. But taking into consideration the fact that the Borough was free from the disease from June (or say the middle of July, when patient would probably be convalescent), till November, shows that the germs were imported, either borne in on us by the air, or in some form of food. The drinking water supplied to the Borough is above suspicion, else there would be a different tale to tell as to numbers of sickness. In the two cases where pump water was used for domestic purposes, the water was tested and found free from contamination. The sewers, I am informed, are regularly flushed. On the appearance of the earlier cases, I suggested that disinfectants should be used in the flushing. The milk used in each family affected was supplied from different sources, and, in the majority of cases, was only taken in small quantities in tea. Many of the cases in the early stages showed more the symptoms of Influenza than Typhoid. We have not yet learned the secret of Influenza, whence it comes, but if the germs of Typhoid are to come linked with Influenza, then indeed we may tremble, for note the damage which is done each year by Influenza. If I have not to record many deaths from Influenza, a good deal of illness in the course of twelve months is caused by it. Since I began this report, three fresh cases of Typhoid have occurred which are not included in the list for 1898. I would ask the householders on their part, to pay more attention to the flushing of their drains, and the

cleanliness of their w.c.'s and pans, for without this co-operation it will be difficult to prevent sewer gas arising in their portion of the drains, and as there have been so many cases of Typhoid Fever, the germs of the disease might very easily spread if flushing and disinfection are neglected: this method would at least prevent its spreading from this source. I consider it would be well to lessen the number of the pail system if possible, as they form very often a nidus for disease.

ERYSIPELAS.—Three fatal cases from this cause have been registered: one in an elderly lady in Fair Close, another near the Pound—this old lady complained very much of the smell from the Gas Works, which made her very sick—the third on the Walk. Other cases occurred in Newgate street, Hungate lane, Denmark road, and Ingate street.

DIPHTHERIA.—I find 25 cases of this illness have been notified all over the Borough, *viz.*: London road, Gosford road, Fair Close, Peddar's lane, Ingate road, Blyburgate street, Denmark road, Market place, Pudding moor, and Northgate street. The cases were more virulent and numerous in October when the rains came on the top of the long drought. I have noticed Diphtheria is more prevalent in wet weather, and when the wind is east.

SCARLET FEVER has been with us, though in a mild form, for a great portion of the year. The first case was in Old Mill Terrace, in January; next in Ballygate street, in March; then in April we have three members of a family laid up at Brick Kiln Farm. No more cases till September, when I saw a child in Caxton road who had had the disease three years previously; this was considered due to some defect in a drain near the house, which has been remedied. Next in Saltgate street, Exchange square, Roos hall cottages, Ingate street, the Bridge, Peddar's lane, and Ballygate street. All are convalescent, and, with the exception of one patient in the disquamating stage, there are no more cases in the Borough. I have, in my quarterly reports, given particulars of the majority of these cases, so need not trouble you with a further repetition of them.

Now with all these cases of Infectious illness in the Borough, I consider it is our duty to construct an Isolated or Fever Hospital, where the sick would be properly nursed, and not in the haphazard way in which they now are. Amongst the

Typhoid Fever patients there were only two who could be considered as eligible for the Fever Hospital at Shipmeadow, the majority being nursed in their own homes by professional nurses—this, though, at great expense to the invalid or friends.

Another very cogent reason why we should be prepared for danger is in the working of the New Vaccination Act, and the liberty given to the "*Conscientious Objector*" to contract Small Pox for his child if he will.

During the year there has been started a District Nurse for the benefit of the poor, in attending them in their homes during their illnesses, and inability to perform any domestic duties. This very useful project might be further extended with advantage, as one Nurse cannot attend to the great number who require her services. With a view to assist the Nurse in her duties, some young ladies might become Probationers, and undergo a course of training in this useful sphere.

Although not included in the list of Infectious cases for 1898, I have seen Typhoid Fever in Old Mill Terrace, for which there is no difficulty in finding a cause, for here a very bad state of things exist, *viz.*: W.C.'s without water laid on, true there is water in the yard, but that is not sufficient, for when the flushing of the pan is left to the care of the householder in this fashion, there must, through hurry or carelessness, be accumulation, and consequently blockage. Without much delay the landlord should be compelled to lay on the water (I understand the syphon tanks are considered the best and most useful, and inexpensive), also two ventilating shafts, one at the top of the terrace and the other at the street end.

The Seavenging is being better attended to, but in the summer months, when the traffic through the town is so much, it would be well to put on an extra man after the regular men leave off.

We see by the Surveyor's report that twenty-four fresh connections have been made with the Public Sewers; this means extra work for the sewers, which accordingly require extra attention in the way of flushing and ventilation, more especially now that Typhoid is in our midst.

I hoped to be able to congratulate the Gas Co. on the abatement of the nuisance from their works, but I have heard frequent complaints of the smell which causes some to be sick

and unable to take their food. A little care and attention would easily remedy this.

There have been eleven deaths from Phthisis : this is now regarded as an Infectious Disease, so much so that in some quarters they consider it is notifiable under the Notification Act.

I enclose copies of the Sanitary Inspector's and Surveyor's reports, which call for no comments from me.

The following number of Births and Deaths have been registered during the year :—

	BIRTHS.			DEATHS.	
	M	F		M	F
January	9	5	...	7	3
February	10	6	...	10	2
March ...	9	5	...	2	5
April ...	7	5	...	9	2
May ...	7	6	...	3	5
June ...	3	11	...	7	5
July ...	8	8	...	2	1 <i>remarkable.</i>
August ...	11	9	...	3	3
September	6	5	...	2	4
October ...	7	4	...	5	8
November	7	13	...	5	3
December	10	6	...	7	5
94 83=177			62 46=108		

We see by this table that more males have been born, and that more males have taken leave of this world during the past 12 months.

There have been 7 Coroner's Inquests, and the following are some of the causes of deaths :—

Premature birth	...	...	...	12
Senile decay	...	...	...	11
Influenza	...	...	...	6
Heart disease	...	...	...	5
Bronchitis	...	...	...	3
Broncho pneumonia (<i>last year there were 15</i>)	...	...	...	18
Erysipelas	...	...	...	3
Typhoid Fever	...	...	...	2
Measles ...	...	...	...	2
Diarrhoea	...	...	...	3
Cancer (<i>last year 6</i>)	...	...	...	3

Diphtheria caused no death this year, last year there were 6.

The acreage of the Borough is 1892, and the population at the last census, 6669, I should be disposed to reckon it as 7500. There will soon be no vacant spots for building on. With the increase of population there must be increase of disease, and necessarily more care required in watching over the sanitary condition of the town.

My friend, Mr. Clifford Smith, has again favoured me with the record of the Rainfall, which amounts to 20·55 inches. He remarks that in the first quarter it was much below the average.

Mr. Dowson has kindly sent me the following table :—

	Mean Temp.	Max. Temp.	Min. Temp.	Rain.
May	49·9	64·9	31·7	3·24
June	56·4	76·0	36·5	3·01
July	58·9	78·8	39·0	1·54
August	62·3	85·1	43·6	1·35

Yours, etc.,

W. T. McCOMB.

Extract from the Sanitary Inspector's Report Book :—

“ Dairies and Cowkeepers' premises have been kept in good order throughout the year.

“ There are 9 registered Slaughter Houses.

“ There are 5 Gunpowder licensed premises, inclusive of two for Fireworks.

“ There are 3 dealers in Benzoline and 12 in Paraffin.

“ There are 2 common Lodging Houses.

“ *All the above have been periodically inspected.*

“ Where pigs were kept contrary to the Bye-Laws, on receipt of notice from the Town Clerk, the nuisances were abated.

“ Nine notices in all, relating to various sanitary matters were sent from the Town Clerk's office, and had the effect of preventing further proceedings.

“ One-hundred-and-three cases were brought under notice, irrespective of preliminary notices sent out.

“ In two cases of Water Analysis, the samples were found to be “ good.”

Report of the Borough Surveyor.

The following works of sanitary interest and general improvement have been carried out in the Borough during the past year.

Plans for nineteen new buildings of the residential class have been passed and approved by the Sanitary Authority; among these are included the plans for "St. Benet's Minster, Church, and Monastery," a large and handsome building to be erected in St. Mary's road. Five other premises have undergone advantageous alterations and additions, especially among the business premises in the town, which have been greatly improved thereby.

Plans have also been passed for two buildings of the workshop class.

There have been about 24 fresh connections made with the public sewers, and sewer ventilation has been improved, two column ventilators having been erected, and special attention is at the present time being given to all public ventilators. The Bye-Law with respect to new buildings concerning ventilation is being enforced, but there are many buildings in the Borough which suffer from want of properly ventilated drains. As these cases come under attention, ventilation is being enforced.

The surface-water sewers have received due attention, and the old system of cesspool and D trap is being removed in every possible ease, and supplanted by good street gully traps.

The system of sewage-disposal is working very favourably. It has been found necessary to make another filter bed still further from the town, so as to be able to alternately rest and crop each bed, and thus prevent the whole surface under treatment from becoming sewage sick.

The Lime process which was established last year, and also the mixer give every satisfaction. It has been found necessary to slightly increase the quantity of lime used. I have good reason to believe that, with proper attention, the present system of sewage disposal will meet the requirements of the Borough for several years to come.

During the year, the road past Messrs. Durrant & Sons' Sale Ground has been taken over and made up, and well paved. This must prove a great boon to the many people who regularly use that road. It would be further improved even now if the remaining portion of the road belonging to the G.E.R. were put in anything like decent repair with some good material.

About 650 square yards cement concrete paving have been laid in various parts of the Borough during the year, besides other paths which have been kerbed and channelled and made up with gravel.

Just over 10,000 square yards of streets and roads have been broken up, re-metalled, and rolled by steam roller. The work has been fairly successful, and the "Quenast" stone used seems likely to give every satisfaction.

In the course of a year or two I hope to connect all the various streets which have been well made up, and gradually bring the whole into a good condition.

Yours faithfully,

THOS. W. WOODROFFE.

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